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NOTES FOR REMARKS

BY

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This colloquium is about science and technology, about their application for the betterment of the human condition, and about the special needs of the developing countries.

More than 20 years ago the United Nations organized an international conference on these themes. It was called the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas. Papers presented there indicated that of all S & T activities worldwide, not more than 3% were undertaken within the developing countries. Six years later, the World Bank Commission chaired by Lester Pearson found that that figure had not changed, indeed commented that a good deal of the research then underway in the Third World was irrelevant to the needs of those countries, of no practical value, or in some instances contrary to their interests.

Out of that awareness IDRC was created by Parliament 15 years ago. We endeavour from time to time to determine whether that 3% figure has changed. It had not in

1979 when a second U.N. Conference on Science and Technology for Development took place in Vienna. Nor has it likely changed since. And this, notwithstanding an immense increase in budgetary allocations for research activities on the part of the major donor organizations.

There are two reasons for this seemingly contradictory circumstance. One, of course, is the skyrocketing science budgets of the industrialized countries, a good deal of it for military purposes. The United States, over five years for example, is proposing to spend \$26 billion in the research phase of its Space Defence Initiative alone. That kind of expenditure makes it difficult to improve the 3% figure. To make the point even more dramatically, the grand total of the 1983 operating budgets of the 16 Ontario universities represented here was significantly less than the governments of the world spent on armaments every single day that year.

Another reason stems from the fact that not all donor science support actually takes place within the developing countries. Not all agencies are like IDRC, with

a mandate to support research in the LDCs, rather than in the industrialized countries on behalf of the LDCs. The latter is laudatory and in some instances absolutely necessary, but it does not always contribute to the enhancement of the research competence and capacity of the developing country science communities.

This competence-building, successive IDRC Boards have insisted, must be the primary objective of Centre assistance. More important even than the solution of specific problems is the capacity to identify problems, to set policies, to fix priorities. This capacity must be indigenous or its value is diluted.

The development of this capacity is a long-term exercise. It requires a long-term commitment. On-again, off-again support does little to build research capacity, and even less to overcome the biological road-blocks which stand in the way of increased agricultural production. In that respect, food aid in response to pressing humanitarian need is a vital, compassionate act. By itself, however, it does not build capacity which leads toward food self-

sufficiency. This is well accepted, yet today there are major donor governments who are sending emergency food to Ethiopia, but who will not support Ethiopian agricultural development. Grain for food, but not grain for seeds.

Sustenance was a major element in the minds of Parliamentarians when they created IDRC in 1969-70. The all-party support for the concept of this unusual organization was inspired to a considerable degree by an awareness of the long-term, hazardous nature of research activity, and the need for a sustained response, one not subject to changing government policies, but instead directed and monitored by an independent, international Board of Governors made up of distinguished scientists and development experts from industrialized and developing countries alike.

That awareness and that commitment has been reflected by successive Parliaments and successive Governments. The quality of IDRC Governors is superb, as Dr. Wardlaw pointed out. Those appointed by the current government have outstanding scientific and developmental

credentials. The present Board, in my judgement, is as strong as any since the creation of the Centre and stands proudly in comparison with that of any other scientific body in Canada, or abroad.

Independence requires more than a Board, however. It requires as well financial commitment, the sustained flow of funds from Parliament to the Centre to permit multi-year project funding without the fear of interruption, and to permit IDRC to be a research donor organization, not a bureaucratic wrestling team constantly expending its energies in search of supplementary funding. IDRC's statute, and successive governmental decisions, have lent to the Centre a very special status in this respect. IDRC funds do not lapse, IDRC is not subject to many of the strictures of the Financial Administration Act, IDRC is specifically exempt from the general application of the Crown Corporations Legislation, (an exemption that extended from the outset only to IDRC, the Bank of Canada, and the Canadian Wheat board), IDRC employees are not members of the Public Service.

This extraordinary uniqueness is not by us taken for granted. It must be earned on a continuing basis. The Centre must be able to show again and again and again to Governments and Parliaments and Canadians that the unusual nature of IDRC is what permits it to function effectively, is what brings to Canada extraordinary goodwill from all corners of the globe. The Centre, however, cannot do this on its own. It requires the audible support of scientists in Canada and abroad. I count very much on each of you to make known to Parliamentarians that IDRC, while admittedly far from perfect, has been able to do what it has because it is not part of government, not subject to governmental rules and regulations designed for organizations with mandates immensely different from IDRC.

IDRC was created in 1970 as an organization responsible to Parliament, not to Ministers; subject to audit by the Auditor General, not intervention by central agencies of government. I pledge to you that IDRC will do its best to continue to deserve being so treated. I trust as well that it will continue to merit the support of you - those members of the Canadian scientific community dedicated

to development - for your respect we at the Centre regard as the most important of all.

In the course of this colloquium, my colleagues and I look forward to hearing your points of view, and learning of your experience in development related research. We treasure the opportunity to tell you of some of the activities in which we have been engaged. Research in Malaysia to protect consumers against the dangers of outdated, impotent, or dangerous drugs. Research in the alto plano of South America to encourage improved storage and marketing techniques for agricultural produce and thus bring a better return to peasant farmers. Research in the Middle East and in Sub-Saharan Africa to reduce the incidence of disease spread by water-borne pathogens and vectors. Research in the Caribbean, in China and in South Asia which utilizes the benefits of high technology in order to permit scientists better to benefit from computerized data bases, from recent accomplishments in biotechnology or geophysical techniques, or better analysis of data transmitted by earth-orbiting satellites.

Some of this is rather glamorous, much of it is quite mundane. However, none of it, I fear, will make the slightest impression on the Canadian public - no matter how highly we in this colloquium regard either the methodology or the results - unless we are able to demonstrate some progress toward amelioration of the famine now so widespread throughout much of Africa. What is happening there is creating a mélange of contradictions, upon the resolution of which might well depend the future attitude of Canadians to official development assistance:

- if so much progress has been achieved in Asia, why has Africa not equally benefitted?
- if the need in Africa is so great, as is obvious, is there any possibility of reversing these disastrous circumstances or is the case hopeless?
- can one dissociate human rights and a free enterprise system from development accomplishment?

- and, of greatest pertinence to IDRC, if organizations such as the Centre have been active for more than a decade in the Sahel, why are the results not more tangible and more widespread?

These aren't easy questions to answer. Important questions never are. A few miles from here, a few hours from now, other questions will be posed, ones that have lost none of their pungency, none of their relevance, in the four centuries since first they were asked. Nor, in that long period, have they once and for all been satisfactorily answered. Both hope and dismay are contained in some of them, and certainly in that famous line from King Lear:

"The worst is not,

So long as we can say, 'This is the worst.'"

It is one thing to sit in the Festival Theatre at Stratford and marvel at the genius of Shakespeare. It is another to sit at home and view incalculable misery on a 21 inch screen, to be told - as the President of the World Bank has recently stated - that one-half to three-fourths of all

the population of sub-Saharan Africa exist in absolute poverty, which means that they are too poor to obtain a calorie-adequate diet, one which will permit them to live healthy lives and have some marginal energy to earn a living. To be told that more than one-half of the children of Gambia die by the age of five. To be told that there is only one doctor for every 21,000 Africans, in comparison with one doctor for every 512 Canadians. These impressions can either encourage Canadians and their elected representatives to increase their developmental efforts - or, sadly but possibly, reduce them considerably.

This audience knows that incidence of poverty has been as bad or worse elsewhere, that food production statistics have been less promising elsewhere, that circumstances of human rights and civil liberties have been much more desperate elsewhere - often in countries with long traditions of cultural and educational accomplishment. And, most important, that these circumstances have in many instances been reversed, or at least largely overcome. But that knowledge is not wide-spread throughout Canada. It is our responsibility, I suggest, to be active in spreading the

word that success is, indeed, possible - to encourage an awareness that our economic prosperity, our political stability, and our environmental wholesomeness depend very much on conditions in developing countries; that present circumstances in Africa, no matter how bleak, can be improved greatly with dedicated, sustained effort.

It has been five years since the Brandt Commission spoke in sombre terms:

"A number of poor countries are threatened with the irreversible destruction of their ecological systems; many face growing food deficits and possibly mass starvation. In the international economy there is the possibility of competitive trade restrictions or devaluations; a collapse of credit with defaults by major debtors, or bank failures; a deepening recession under possible energy shortages or further failures of international cooperation; an intensified struggle for spheres of interest and influence, or for control over resources, heading to military conflicts. The 1980s

could witness even greater catastrophes than the 1930s."

Tragically few governments have since paid much heed to those words. Prime Minister Trudeau, and now Prime Minister Mulroney, find themselves very much in the minority at Western Economic Summits as they endeavour to stimulate their summit colleagues to respond to the plight of the developing world. Communiqués devote more or fewer paragraphs to developing country needs while quantity and quality of aid all-too-often deteriorate.

Since Brandt spoke with such clarity, a global recession of unprecedented dimensions has struck the world, placing at risk alike the economic future of LDCs and the economic health of the industrialized countries. Environmental degradation of massive proportions has contributed significantly to the famine crisis in Ethiopia and the Sahel. Domestic economic disparities in this hemisphere and elsewhere are a powder keg contributing to political instability and outright military aggression. Since the conclusion of World War II, there have been less

than seven weeks when the world has been free of military activity. Seven weeks, not years, not even months. Of the more than 150 international conflicts or civil wars in that period, only a handful have not been located in the Third World (notably those in Greece and Northern Ireland). Few of these have not had an impact of greater or less degree on the industrialized countries. Algeria, Nigeria, the Middle East again and again, Rhodesia, Malaya, Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua.... The list goes on and on. The threat of each to world peace is only partly a factor of the hyperbole of the super-power leaders of the moment - it is also, we must never forget, real. Extension of war by accident or miscalculation is, in the nuclear age, a very real and very dangerous possibility. In this autumn before nuclear winter, vigilance has never before been so necessary. Goethe's contention that "Nothing is more dangerous than active ignorance" has never before been so pertinent.

There is a self-sustaining element to the myopia now abroad. To quote still again from President Clausen "... IDA is now severely underfunded. More generally, donor

governments are redirecting their foreign aid money away from development purposes toward their own national security purposes, and away from the poorest of the poor countries to those developing countries in which they have greater commercial or political interests - the middle-income countries."

In all of this, it would be arrogant in the extreme to pretend that any of us, as individuals or in our corporate capacities, can be a determining factor. The current Parliamentary Grant of IDRC, after all, is only \$86 million, scarcely more than 4% of Canadian ODA, less than one-fifth the budget of NRC and one-third the budget of NSERC. But it would be equally wrong to suppose that we are without influence, and, certainly, without obligation. The state of the world today is in large measure a reflection of science and technology, some of it of overwhelming human benefit; some of it with incalculable potential for horror and destruction.

As scientists - physical, natural, or social, as individuals with an expressed dedication to improving the plight of human beings in the developing countries, we have an obligation as well as the opportunity to work and to speak in furtherance of our beliefs. At the very least we must, in the words of Lewis Thomas, encourage others of the barrenness of continuing to regard the world about us as little more than a combination playground, garden and zoo.

All of which, you will say, is rather large talk to launch a colloquium with advertised limited purposes. I accept that. I'm nevertheless audacious enough to think that none of us here would wish Canadians to believe that our interests are limited to improving health, nutrition, or education levels in Africa or anywhere else, no matter how important or how noble those tasks are. As passengers on an increasingly imperilled "Spaceship Earth", we must keep in mind both our immediate commitments and our longer-term obligations. Not just the 21 inch screen; the big picture.

I don't pretend that that's exactly an original challenge. Few are. That doesn't mean it's not worth repeating.

On another stage at Stratford this week choruses will be singing the delightful lyrics of Sir W.S. Gilbert giving praise to Pirate Kings and Englishmen. Gilbert in another instance had good advice for such as me when he wrote: "Though I'm anything but clever, I could talk like this forever." I'm not, and I won't.

I thank you, President Wright, for your hospitality. Thank you, Madame le président Wardlaw, for your warm words. Thank you everyone for your attendance at this event and, most particularly, for your dedication to development issues. I look forward very much to the sessions ahead.